

OPEN LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF NEW ENGLAND

*Even if you're on the right track,
you'll get run over if you just sit there.*
—Will Rogers



C. Franks

The character of New Englanders reflects a culmination of influences as disparate as they are positive. Fiercely independent, yet rooted in community; strongly traditionalist, yet consistently revolutionary in action; we are a people as varied and vital as our natural setting.

These crosscurrents have defined EPA's work in New England over this past year as well. Our use of traditional means of environmental protection has been sharpened – a record year in criminal enforcement actions and aggressive use of our authority under the National Environmental Policy Act, for example – even as we have developed exciting new approaches – StarTrack, CLEAN, State Performance Partnership Agreements, and Brownfields among them – to respond to new challenges.

Will Rogers once said, “Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there.” We have taken those words to heart. The course we charted three years ago – to bring about cultural and organizational change within our agency, utilize sounder science and stronger economics in our efforts, and transform this office into a force for education and empowerment of others – is serving the environment and the taxpayers well.

We have focused on places, not programs, and addressed environmental problems more holistically. We have striven to enlighten the regulated community, working with them on an industry by industry basis, and in the process, we have increased compliance and reduced pollution. We have opened our ears and extended our hands to New England communities, environmental advocates, and businesses, and learned from them how to better target our all-too-limited resources.

To complete the task, we have to move forward with even greater energy and discipline. In many ways, it will mean building and expanding on the directions initiated by previous generations of environmental policy makers. In others, it will mean forging new paths and generating new ideas for making EPA better able to handle the complex, ever changing challenges of environmental protection.

It has been said that environmental protection is the most successful area of public policy in our generation. Here in New England, we will not forget the lessons that have made our efforts successful. But neither will we walk into the future with our gaze fixed over our shoulder. Combining new tools with past experience, we will continue to work hard on behalf of New England's environment.

In this next year, as we have over the past twelve months, we at EPA will work with all of you to help bring common sense to our common problems for the common good and to make all of New England a safer, healthier, more beautiful place for all who follow.

John P. DeVillars
Regional Administrator
EPA's New England Office